

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is requested.

Claims 1-11 remain in the application. All of the claims have been amended to eliminate the numeric references. Numeric references are not required under U.S. patent law and are given no patentable weight. Accordingly, the amendment to eliminate the numeric references is not a narrowing amendment and is not an amendment entered for purposes of patentability. Claim 1 has been amended to define the invention more clearly. Claim 3 has been amended to address an informality noted in the Office Action. Claim 5 has been amended into independent form with all the limitations of the base claim and the intervening claims. Claims 7, 8 and 11 were amended to address informalities noted in the Office Action.

The Examiner objected to the title and required a title that is more descriptive of the invention.

The title has been amended in accordance with the request of the Examiner.

Claims 1, 8, 10 and 11 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Jinno. Claim 9 was rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being obvious over Jinno.

The Jinno reference relates to a connector with opposite front and rear ends and cavities extending between the ends. Terminal fittings are inserted forwardly into the cavities from the rear end of the housing. The housing is formed with resiliently deflectable locks that will engage the terminal fitting when the terminal fitting is inserted properly into the corresponding cavity. The Jinno connector also includes retainer that

is mounted to the rear end of the housing. The retainer can move forward and rearward substantially along the inserting direction of the terminal fittings into the Jinno cavities. In an initial position, the Jinno retainer permits the terminal fittings to be inserted through the retainer and into the cavities. The Jinno retainer then is moved forwardly relative to the housing. As a result, flexible projections 10 move into a space adjacent the resiliently deflectable locks of the housing. Thus, the flexible projections of the Jinno retainer prevent the locks of the housing from deflecting out of engagement with the terminal fittings. The connector housing of Jinno is formed with support frames 8 that project out from opposite sidewalls of the housing. Plates 14 project forward from the retainer and are disposed for sliding along opposite sidewalls at the rear end of the Jinno housing and within the support frames 8 formed on the sides of the housing. Each plate 14 is formed with a projection that will releasibly lock with a deflectable member 6 formed on the support frame 8.

The manufacturers of electrical connectors are under tremendous pressure from their customers to make connectors that are smaller without adversely affecting the strength or electrical performance of the connector. The Jinno connector is very large. In particular, Jinno requires the retainer to have support pieces that slide along outer surfaces of the housing and then requires the housing to have support frames that surround outer surfaces of the support pieces.

The invention defined by amended claim 1 differs from Jinno in several significant respects. First, the retainer of the connector defined by amended claim 1 is mounted to the housing at an angle to the inserting direction of the terminal fitting into the cavity. In contrast, Jinno has a retainer that is moved parallel to the inserting

direction. The Jinno reference would have to be redesigned completely to convert the Jinno rear-mounted retainer into a retainer that is mounted at an angle to the terminal inserting direction. Second, the Jinno retainer does not engage the terminal fitting, but rather merely engages a lock in the housing to prevent the lock in the housing from deflecting. The movement of the Jinno retainer parallel to the inserting direction would seem to preclude engagement between the retainer and the terminal fitting as set forth in amended claim 1. Most significantly, the side plates 14 of Jinno do not have tapered peripheral ends and protecting portions projecting out from the housing for covering the tapered peripheral ends of the side plates while leaving portions of the side plates between the main body of the retainer and the peripheral ends substantially exposed on the sides of the housing. It is believed that Jinno would have to be redesigned substantially completely to provide a retainer that is mounted at an angle to the inserting direction and that engages and locks the terminal fittings in the cavities. Additionally, Jinno has no suggestion of providing side plates with tapered peripheral ends and protecting portions on the housing for covering the tapered peripheral ends of the side plates while leaving remaining portions of the side plates exposed. The claimed connector is significantly smaller by completely eliminating Jinno's support frame 8 for covering the support plates 14 of the Jinno retainer. Accordingly, it is submitted that the invention defined by amended claim 1 and dependent claims 8-11 is not taught or suggested by Jinno.

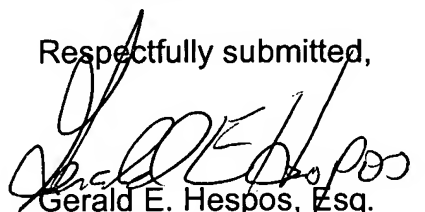
Claims 1-4, 10 and 11 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) in view of Nebeshima et al. The Examiner identified elements of the Nebeshima et al. reference that were compared by the Examiner to elements recited in original claim 1.

The Nebeshima et al. reference is assigned to the assignee of the subject invention and is more relevant than Jinno. However, the Nebeshima et al. reference has no suggestion of an tapered peripheral end of a side plate on the Nebeshima et al. retainer and no suggestion of a protecting portion for partly covering the tapered peripheral end of the side plate so that tapered peripheral end of the side plate is at least partly between the sidewall of the housing and the protecting portion while remaining portions of the side plate are exposed on the side of the housing. Nothing in Nebeshima et al. would motivate the skilled artisan to revise Nebeshima et al. connector in a way that will bring Nebeshima et al. closer to the invention defined by the amended claims.

The applicants, the assignee and counsel are pleased to note that the Examiner considers claims 5-7 to be directed to patentable subject matter. Claim 5 has been amended into independent form with all the limitations of claims 1-4. It is believed, therefore, that amended independent claim 5 and its dependent claims 6 and 7 are in condition for allowance.

In view of the preceding amendments and remarks, it is submitted that all of the claims remaining in the application are directed to patentable subject matter and allowance is solicited. The Examiner is urged to contact applicants' attorney at the number below to expedite the prosecution of this application.

Respectfully submitted,


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